

WORLD MALARIA DAY 2008

Bangladesh stands with all

DR RIFFAT HOSSAIN LUCY

The first ever World Malaria Day was observed yesterday with a view to increase mass awareness and ramp up the global efforts to provide effective control of malaria around the world.

Malaria, a serious infectious disease kills about over a million each year – mostly children. More than half a billion people are infected with malaria every year. Although the disease is preventable, a child dies from it every 30 seconds.

Malaria is a disease of tropical and sub-tropical countries, and one of the major public health problems in Bangladesh. It is caused by a parasite called Plasmodium transmitted by female Anopheles mosquitoes. Four species of plasmodia cause human malaria: *P. vivax*, *P. falciparum*, *P. ovale* and *P. malariae*.

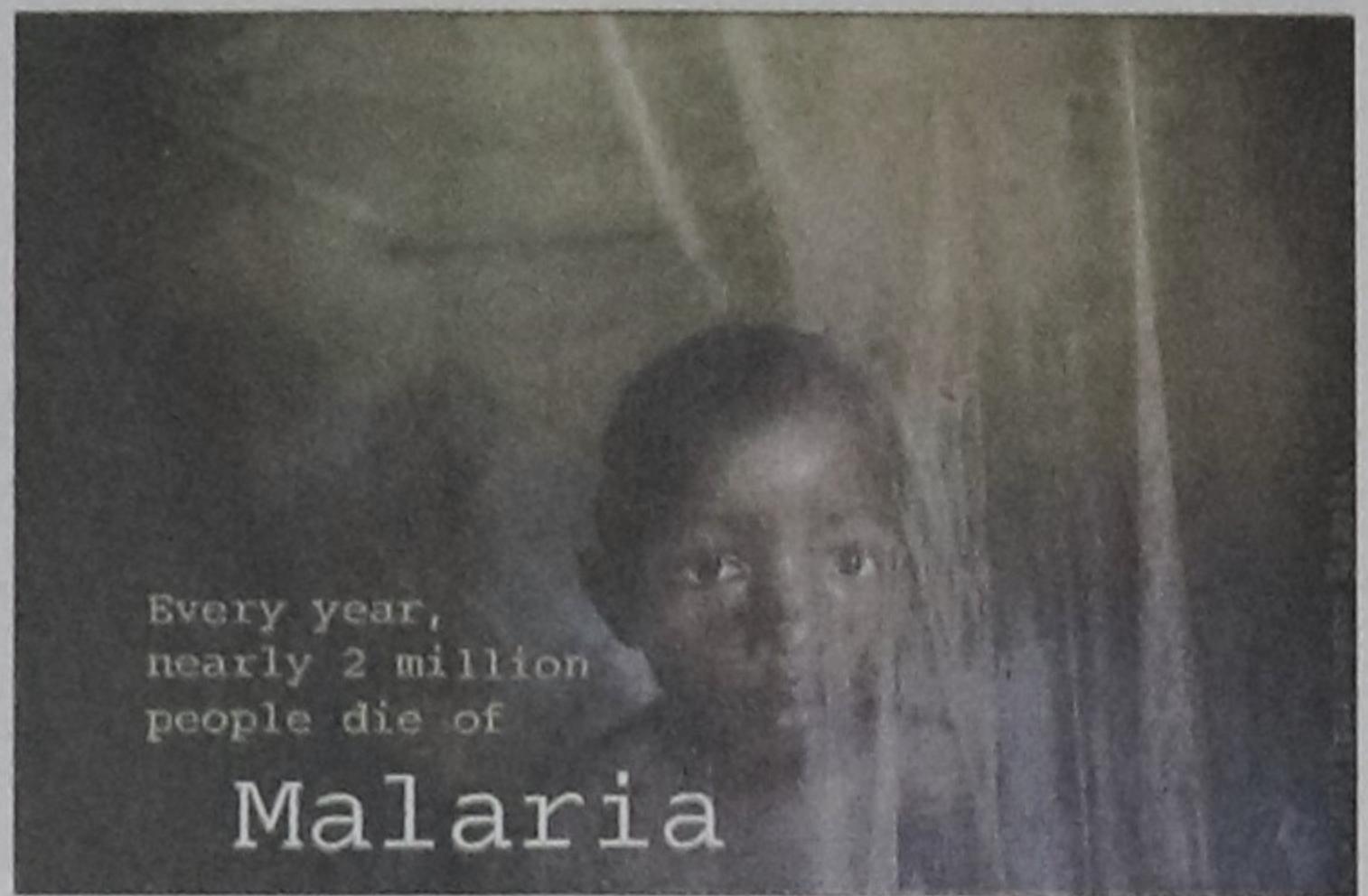
Plasmodium falciparum is the predominant infection (61-71%) in our country. Out of 64 districts, 13 border-districts in the east

and northeast are highly malaria endemic. About 98 percent of the total malaria cases are reported from these districts. Three hill tract districts – Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban have intense perennial transmission of malaria. The zone is extremely hard to reach area.

A total of 14.7 million populations are at high-risk of malaria in the country. In 2005, a total of 242,297 clinical cases and 48,121 laboratory-confirmed cases were reported from these 13 high endemic districts of which, 501 died. There is gross under-reporting of the malaria cases and deaths in Bangladesh.

It is assumed that the number of cases and deaths from malaria would have been three times higher if information from the community, NGOs, private hospitals and service providers could be included in the routine surveillance reports.

The Malaria Control and Prevention Programme in Bangla-



Malaria

adesh has been accepted by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). It will cover 10.9 million vulnerable populations. A five year grant of 39.06 million USD has been approved by GFATM.

With this support, Malaria Control and Prevention Programme have been expanded

for diagnostic and treatment facilities up to the union level. Additional microscopic centers have been established and malaria diagnostic facilities have been made available at the community level.

Partnership and collaboration with the government and partner NGOs have also been expanded

and strengthen to expand malaria control programme activities in 13 high malaria endemic districts.

To ensure early diagnosis and prompt treatment (EDPT), malaria diagnostic and treatment facilities have been expanded and have been established in remote villages. A well equipped laboratory has been established at each of the 25 upazilas of Chittagong. Microscopic examination of blood slide for malaria parasite is performed in these laboratories.

Present plan of Long Lasting Insecticide-treated Nets (LLINs) distribution and treatment of existing bed nets with insecticide in three hill districts (Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari districts) among the total population of 14,03,245 and total households of 2,83,674. Total number of households covered under LLIN distribution are 1,91,891 and total number of LLINs to be distributed are

2,16,101. Number of existing bed nets to be treated with insecticide 1,82,000.

The policy makers have stressed on prevention. Sleeping under insecticide treated nets for protection against mosquito bites is very important to prevent in the area where malaria is prevalent.

Other effective methods of malaria control include indoor residual spraying, screening of houses, environmental management and killing mosquito larvae using pesticides.

Bangladesh has shown success in roll back of malaria. But there is no room for complacency. As the world marks the malaria day, there is hope that special attention will go towards creating greater community awareness on the dangers the disease poses especially to women and children.

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A call for action

One of the most effective ways countries can protect young people from experimenting and becoming regular tobacco users is to ban all forms of direct and indirect tobacco advertising, including promotion of tobacco products and sponsorship, by the tobacco industry, of any events or activities.

e-mail: starhealth@medialystar.net



HAVE A NICE DAY

Less sleep may cost a lot!

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

depends on how you feel when you wake up. If you feel fine and active, then you probably had a good night's sleep.

Sleep does many useful things. Chronic sleeplessness may have an effect on the immune system. In the long-run, less sleep may contribute to hypertension, memory impairment, loss of creativity, communication and depression. Some studies revealed that men with diabetes and men with short or disturbed sleep tended to have less control of their blood-sugar levels.

In a survey, it has been found that 25 percent of couples reported that their sexual relationship suffered because they were just too tired. Sleep helps in the growth process. During deep sleep, the pituitary gland is found to release a growth hormone. It also helps us restore and repair brain tissue by giving resting neurons time to heal.

Science has already established the benefits of sleep. In fact, we all feel bad-tempered when we are deprived of sleep, the consequences are much worse when we are in our workplaces.

Well, at home, our daily lives are no less hectic and sleep is the one thing that is compromised the most. In general a human being spends about a third of his/her life sleeping. This is the only natural period of rest and reversible loss of consciousness. It is when one's activity decreases and muscles relax. The heartbeat and the breathing rate decelerate.

Although it varies from person to person and on special medical conditions. Usually when a person grows old, they require less sleep. Normally the average adult sleep 6 to 8 hours a day. Children spend about 10-11 hours a day sleeping. And newborns usually sleep for virtually two-thirds of the day.

Quality sleep serves as an indicator of quality life. For some people like doctors, journalists or security personnel, it is not always possible to change their lifestyle.

So, the recommended number of sleeping hours and more importantly the quality of sleep are very important points to take care about.

Those who have to sleep during the day or in noisy localities – they need to find ways to get top-quality sleep. Same thing is applicable if someone is very much stressed.

Last but not the least, the basics of good health are good diet, good exercise and good sleep. Nature is very powerful and strange. Those who try to change the rules of the nature may have their own troubles.

The writer is a Healthcare Management Specialist and Visiting Professor of North South University (NSU), Dhaka, Bangladesh.

MEDICAL WASTE MANAGEMENT

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Safe disposal of medical waste continues to be a matter of serious concern for health. Thousands of tonnes of medical waste originating from hospitals and clinics in the form of cotton swabs and bandages infected with blood, IV fluid bags, needles,

catheters, human tissues and body parts, etc. are not handled and dumped properly.

The condition is more perilous in public hospitals where the maximum bulk of waste products are produced. Such unsafe practice can hasten the spread of some serious infectious virus like HIV, Hepatitis A, Hepati-

tis B, hepatitis C, gastroenteritis, respiratory tract infections and other noxious diseases.

Prism Bangladesh, has been working at a large scale to improve the medical waste management system in association with the government (Dhaka City Corporation). They have come out with a

medical waste management programme which is helping certain private hospitals in the city to dispose off their medical waste properly.

There is dire need to expand the programme to cover all public and private hospitals in the country, since the medical waste can cause lots of hazards. It has a

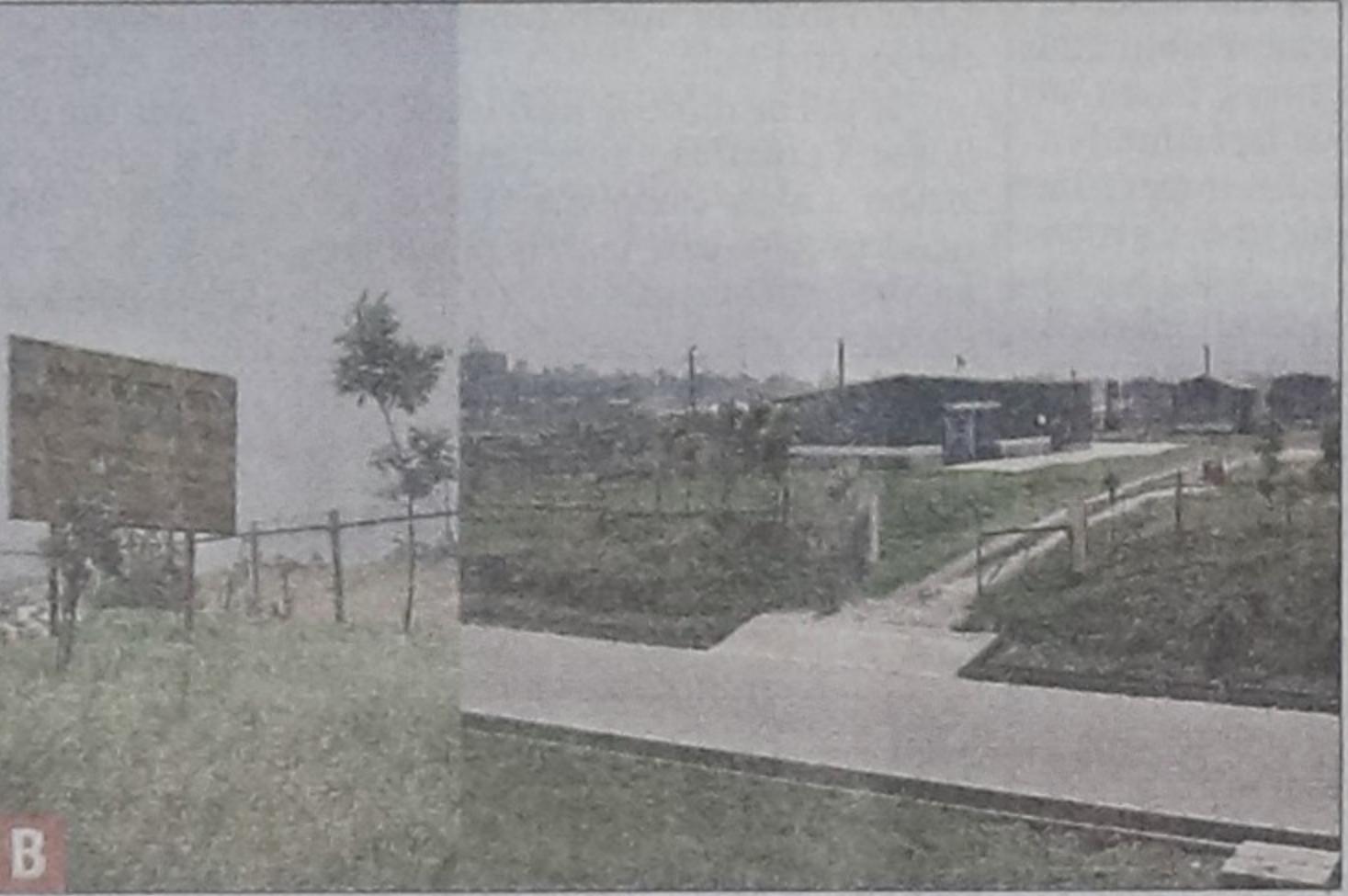
direct impact on health and environment.

Medical waste management issue has to be underscored by both public and private initiative, since there is almost no awareness on the issue.

Currently, there is no specific medical waste management rule in our country.

Inter-ministerial decision is also needed to implement it successfully.

Strict implementation of rules and regulations are badly needed to curb the impending dangers. Experts urged NGOs and other voluntary bodies to come forward come forward in this concern.



(A) Workers carrying medical waste in designated buckets to keep for collection and dumping. (B) The dumping site of "Medical Waste Management Project in Bangladesh" located at Matuail in the city. (C) Workers at the Medical Waste Management Plant are preparing the plastic medical waste for recycling. (D) The incinerator of the medical waste management plant.



Simple regimen eliminates chronic bad breath

Brushing twice a day with anti-bacterial toothpaste and using a toothbrush with a built-in tongue scraper can eliminate chronic bad breath, according to research presented at the 2008 annual meeting of the American Association for Dental Research in Dallas, Texas.

Chronic bad breath, or halitosis, is often caused by the breakdown of bacteria in the mouth, producing foul-smelling sulfur compounds. It is estimated that 25 percent of

adults suffer the embarrassment of chronic bad breath and the percentage may be as high as 50 percent older adults.

Triclosan is an antibacterial agent used in acne medications, hand soaps, detergents and deodorants. "Most toothpastes do not contain triclosan," Dr. Joseph J. Zambon, who was involved in the research, informed.

At the beginning and end of the study, researchers measured mouth air levels of odor-causing

bacteria and analysed tongue scrapings for 20 species of bacteria known to cause bad breath.

According to the researchers, brushing twice daily with triclosan-containing toothpaste and using a tongue scraper reduced levels of odor-causing bacteria in the mouth from an average slightly more than 400 parts-per-billion at the start of the study to an average of 100 parts-per-billion at the end of the 28-day study period.

The move follows similar

Heparin drug impurity found again in 4 countries

REUTERS, London

Batches of Sanofi-Aventis's blood-thinning heparin injection Lovenox have been found to contain small amounts of impurity in Britain, Sweden, Spain and Australia, officials said.

Lovenox is Sanofi's top-selling drug, with sales last year of 2.6 billion euros (\$4.1 billion).

Sanofi spokesman Salah Mahyaoui said the problem only involved a small number of batches and there were no reports of patient injuries.

"It affects a very limited number of batches ... and it's very low concentration (of impurity)," he said.

The Swedish Medical Products Agency said it was withdrawing a small number of contaminated batches of the drug, which is also known as Clexane or Klexane, as a precaution.

The move follows similar

withdrawals by Australian authorities and by Spanish regulators last week, Mahyaoui said.

In Britain, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency stopped short of withdrawing the product. It said doctors could continue to use the drug but should be vigilant to any adverse reactions.

It added there was currently no evidence that the presence of very small amounts of oversulphated chondroitin sulphate in the medicine was associated with any risk to patients.

The latest discoveries follow a series of recent contamination problems with different heparin products in the United States and Germany, which have led to a number of adverse drug reactions (ADRs) in these countries.

"It is important to note that there is no evidence of any increase in the number of ADRs as has been seen in other coun-

tries with other heparin products," the British agency said.

In the United States, tainted heparin from China was used by at least 81 patients who died soon afterwards. They suffered serious allergic reactions, with plummeting blood pressure, swelling of the larynx and other severe symptoms.

Adverse reactions seen in the United States and Germany were from heparin products primarily manufactured by Baxter International Inc and Rotexmedica, respectively.

Sanofi's Mahyaoui said the problems with Lovenox were on a much smaller scale to those seen earlier.

"This impurity was found in a very low concentration, particularly in comparison with what has been observed in some other situations with unfractionated heparins in the United States and Germany," he said.

Saliva test may speed heart attack diagnosis

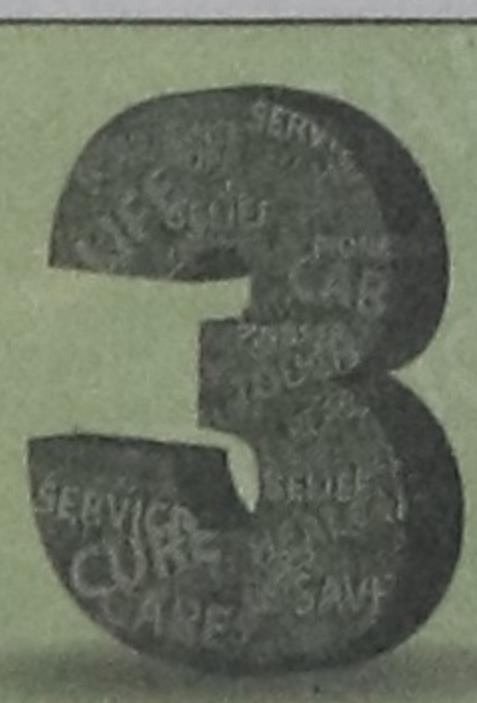
REUTERS, New York

cardiac biomarkers. The loaded card is inserted like an ATM card into an analyser that determines the patient's heart status in as little as 15 minutes.

Many heart attack patients, especially women, experience non-specific symptoms, or have normal EKG readings, making timely diagnosis difficult, McDevitt explained.

"In our small trial, we had about one third of the patients with these... silent heart attacks on EKG." These patients need to go to the emergency department and have their blood drawn and tested for enzymes that are indicative of a heart attack, "which could take an hour to an hour and a half."

The saliva test could be used in conjunction with the EKG and "aid in rapidly diagnosing heart attacks that are silent on EKG," McDevitt said, adding that larger and more refined studies are planned.



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